

Jeanne Van Schaack, LMFT  
Certified School Family Therapist  
81 Simonds Avenue  
Canton, CT 06019  
[860-480-8311](tel:860-480-8311)  
[jvanschaack@comcast.net](mailto:jvanschaack@comcast.net)

To: The Education Committee and General Assembly of the Connecticut Legislature

Date: March 6, 2016

Re: Raised Bill: HB 5550 AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES

I write in support of the raised bill HB 5550: An Act Concerning various revision and additions to the education statutes for Connecticut's Marriage and Family Therapists. I graduated with my Masters degree in Family Therapy in 2006 from Central Connecticut State University. I was licensed by the state of Connecticut in 2009. I went back as a postgraduate to complete the requirements for the School Family Therapy Certification between 2010 and 2013. I was employed by the Winchester Schools during part of that time. I applied and was denied my school certification two times and subsequently lost my position in Winchester as they could not keep me as a school employee without certification. I was unemployed and continued to make attempts to get information from the State Department of Education regarding the changing requirements for certification. After no solid answers I contacted Governor Malloy's office in January of 2013 and they contacted the State Department of Education and a meeting was held with the end result being that I was granted my certification as a School Family Therapist. Unfortunately, not only was my position in Winchester lost but the three years of relationships supporting students, families, faculty and staff ended at a crucial time in our educational system when supports are needed more than ever for social and emotional support and learning in our schools.

In 2006 Dr. Kathleen Laundy and Dr. Ralph Cohen of Central Connecticut State University Marriage and Family Therapy program helped enact the law to certify Marital and Family Therapists (MFTs) for school-based practice. The law in 2006 required MFTs to be fully licensed to obtain school certification unlike other school-based mental health groups (school counseling, psychology and social work). This barrier keeps students who intern in schools from being employed after graduation in those school systems. Currently MFTs are the only mental health professionals required to be licensed to work in a school system. Since licensure requires MFTs to gain a specific amount of client contact hours after graduation it is impossible with the current law for new graduates to work as school family therapists.

I currently facilitate the practicum class at Central Connecticut State University which fulfills a requirement for the certification process. When we place practicum students in schools our systems training equips them to support not only families and students but faculty and staff as our students gain valuable experience in their school placements. Many of the practicum students maintain their relationship with the schools and would like to start their careers after graduation as school family therapists. Amending the law to allow schools the option to hire using the associate license would allow this to happen. I urge you to remove this constraint by supporting the bill HB 5550: An Act Concerning various revision and additions to the education statutes for Connecticut's Marriage and Family Therapists. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Van Schaack, LMFT